



HEALTH PROMOTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
A collaboration between Creche & Kindergarten and QUT

In April 2015, a pilot experience of multidisciplinary collaboration took place in QUT: Five final year Nutrition and Dietetics students from the Faculty of Health undertook their Community and Public Health Nutrition placement along with five second year Early Childhood students from the Faculty of Education in five Creche & Kindergarten childcare centres within Brisbane and Caboolture. Qualitative research was conducted to explore the possibilities that this experience offered to those involved. In this report, we present the main research findings, which include a description of the challenges faced by the participants, the benefits of the experience, and recommendations for future experiences.

Benefits for Students

Despite some initial challenges such as the lack of information about expectations and roles, students were able to combine their skills in a **collaborative process** within a real-world experience.

They had the opportunity to examine their core discipline knowledge and enhance it with other disciplines to address the nutritional needs of the community.

"We were able to teach one another different things, which will most likely be useful for our future careers" (Education Student)

"I could never have learned this from books, I had to actually do it" (Health Student)

"When you work together you think Oh, I hadn't really thought of that" (Education Student)

Benefits for C&K Centres

Families and staff received good concrete **information** regarding healthy eating, dietary requirements and infant feeding guidelines through direct conversations with students, posters and booklets.

Children enjoyed the opportunity to learn **about fruits and vegetables** through songs, stories, pictures and delicious cooking sessions.

"I learnt that it's hard to get good nutrition throughout the day. Maybe I'm not always as healthy eating as I should be" (C&K Educator)

"We now sit down at mealtimes and talk to the children about their lunchbox choices" (C&K Educator)

Benefits for Academics

Academics gained new insights in relation to **supervision styles** and expectations.

They had the opportunity to connect with other professionals, establish some mutually-beneficial relationships with early childhood centres and expand their collaboration networks.

It was a positive experience for both disciplines.

"On our own we can do great work, but together we can do exceptional work" (QUT Health Staff)

"This experience has an immense potential on creating innovative models on how we conduct field experiences" (QUT Education Staff)

Suggestions for future experiences include (1) Provide detailed information for centres, students and supervisors before and during the placement regarding their roles and expectations, (2) The alignment of assessment requirements for Health and Education students, and (3) The inclusion of reflection time for both students and supervisors together.

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